

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed July 7, 2003 has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Claims 1-5 were pending in the application. Claims 2, 3, and 5 have been amended, new claims 6 and 7 have been added and no claims have been cancelled. Therefore, claims 1-7 are pending in the application and are submitted for reconsideration.

The specification has been amended to correct minor informalities to address the issues noted in paragraphs 1B and 2-4 of the Office Action and to improve its readability. No new matter has been added since the amendments correct informalities or provide expansions for abbreviations known to those skilled in the art.

FIGS. 1 and 6 have been amended to address the issues noted in paragraph 1 (sections A and C) of the Office Action and Replacement Sheets are attached hereto.

This amendment changes and adds claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

Claims 2, 3, and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants have amended these claims to better recite the claimed invention and submit that the pending claims are in definite form and meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. With respect to the claimed recess, one example (not intended to be limiting) is the recess 35 disclosed in FIG. 3.

In the Office Action, claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.K. patent 2,347,120 (hereafter "UK '120"). Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. patent 5,941,558 to Labrie et al. (hereafter "Labrie"). Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of Japanese document 6-107103 (hereafter "JP '103"). Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of Japanese document 6-144141 (hereafter "JP '141"). Claim 5 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of U.S. patent 6,402,189 to Gray et al. (hereafter "Gray"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, insofar as they are applicable to the pending claims, for at least the following reasons.

Claim 1 recites an air bag structure in which the door member comprises two hinge portions that cause the door member to swing and thereby form the inflation opening in the air bag lid portion. Of these two hinge portions, the second hinge portion is designed to bend when the inflation pressure of the air bag body is lower than a predetermined value to cause the formation of the inflation opening to be started. UK '120 does not disclose this claimed structure having two hinge portions that cause the door member to swing. Specifically, UK '120 only discloses one relevant hinge (hinge 5b) which causes the main body of the lid plate main body to swing or hinge about hinge 5b. The cited element 5e is simply "an intermediate portion 5e of the lid plate reinforcement 5 that is inwardly bend from the hinge 5b." See page 5, lines 21-22 of UK '120. That is, element 5e is not a "hinge" as would be well recognized by those skilled in the relevant art. Accordingly, UK '120 does not disclose or suggest the claimed second hinge portion.

This deficiency in UK '120 is not cured by any of the other applied prior art. Specifically, neither Labrie nor Gray disclose the claimed two hinge structure. Therefore, none of the relied upon references teach or suggest either the structure or purpose of the features claimed in independent claim 1. Accordingly, independent claim 1 is believed to be patentable over the applied prior art.

In addition, applicants assert that even if the hinge 5b and the intermediate portion 5e of the reference UK '120 is assumed that they correspond to the first and the second hinge portion of the present invention, the reference UK '120 fails to disclose that 1) applying different intensity to the first and the second hinge portion, and 2) bending primarily at either one of the first and the second hinge portions when the inflation pressure of the air bag body is lower than a predetermined value.

The dependent claims are also in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons, as discussed above, as the respective independent claims on which they ultimately depend. In addition, they recite additional patentable features when considered as a whole.

Specifically, claim 2 recites that a recess portion is formed such that the axis-to-axis distance (for example, the distance C in Fig. 3 of the specification) between the hinge axes of the first and second axes is increased. None of the applied references disclose either the two hinges or the recess arranged to increase a distance between the two hinge axes.

New claim 6 recites that the first hinge portion is designed to have a flexural rigidity greater than the second hinge portion and claim 7 recites that the first hinge portion is designed to bend when the inflation pressure of the air bag body is at the predetermined value. These recited features are also not believed to be disclosed or suggested by the applied prior art and provides additional reasons for the patentability of these claims.

In view of the above, applicants believe that the present application is in condition for allowance and an indication of the same is respectfully requested. If there are any questions regarding the application, or if an examiner's amendment would facilitate the allowance of one or more of the claims, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attached: Two (2) formal drawing Replacement Sheet for FIGS. 1 and 6

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper, or if a petition for extension of time is required for timely acceptance of same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge deposit account No. 19-0741 for any such fees; and applicants hereby petition for any needed extension of time.
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